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Statement submitted by Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

* E/CN.6/2005/1.

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Statement

Introduction

The review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Beijing + 5 is taking place in a global economic, political and social climate that threatens to weaken many gains achieved by women thus far.

Different local, national and regional organizations and groups will take up their own priorities within the context of the review, in accordance with their particular circumstances and needs.

Mentioned below are some of the key issues of concern to Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, a non-governmental organization whose mission is to promote leadership, advocacy and empowerment to effect social change and public policy, resulting in the improved well-being of individuals and families, especially African Americans and women. Recognizing that social action is personal, local and global, Delta's National Social Action Commission works collectively with the Sorority's national officers, regional and local membership, as well as coalition partners, to implement its social action agenda in these areas.

Empowerment through participation in the political process

Women's empowerment involves the raising of consciousness, identification of areas needing change, and development of effective policies and strategies to address them.

Political participation encompasses a wide range of actions and strategies, including voting, voter education, candidacy for national and local elections and supporting candidates who espouse gender-sensitive policies.

The Sorority will continue its active partnerships with major civil and human rights organizations in an ambitious and aggressive voter empowerment program. In that vein, it launched a campaign to support reauthorization of key provisions of the United States Voting Rights Act. The Voting Rights Act of 1965 provided the single greatest legislative victory in the African American struggle for political equality and democratic voice. Delta's current two-year campaign will begin with education and training sessions during Delta Days at the Nation's Capital, continue with community events and additional empowerment activities at other Delta events and culminate with the reauthorization of the Voting Rights Act in 2007.

Addressing health disparities

Ensuring access to quality health care, whether for diagnostic treatment or preventive measures, is of critical importance to women's health and wellness. As women age and their need for health care grows, the likelihood of their being uninsured increases. In 2002, the US Census Bureau reported that health insurance coverage, considered a prerequisite of adequate medical care, was not only eroding but would likely worsen over the next several years.

With funding by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, the Sorority has launched the Delta health insurance education and advocacy program. Its goal is to train Delta members to effectively educate their communities about health care disparities and challenges African American women face in acquiring health insurance coverage.

Another important aspect of the Sorority's health initiatives focuses on educating the global community on how to decrease the AIDS pandemic. The number of HIV-infected women continues rising worldwide; clinical trials are insufficient and more attention is needed on reducing the high cost of HIV medication to women around the world.

Ratification of treaty bodies

The Sorority will continue to collaborate with other women's and human rights organizations to urge the United States Congress to ratify the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.